CHAPTER XLVT

MILITARY OUTLOOK FOR 1917

I. EXISTING STRATEGICAL PLANS

AMONGST the first duties that fell to the Cabinet was a survey of the military position, with a view to deciding whether any reconsideration of the plans agreed to by the late Government for the campaign of 1917 was desirable or possible.

As I have been subjected to much adverse criticism for not insisting upon a complete reversal of the strategical policy hitherto pursued, it is necessary that I should at this stage review the military situation as I found it when I took office.

When I took over the civilian direction of the War as Prime Minister, the conditions under which the struggle was to continue had been already irrevocably fixed by decisions or failures to decide, against which I had made unceasing but unavailing protests at every step.

Our great commanders, having refused or neglected to organise a break-through where and when it was feasible, and having made ineffective attempts on fronts where such rupture was impossible, thereby throwing away cannon-fodder myriads of valuable lives and losing inestimable time and opportunity, being unable to think out anything more original, had fallen back

Difficulty of reversing strategical policy

Military staffs assume docility of Governments